

Good Afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, Senator Caligiuri, Representative Giuliano and members of the Education Committee. My name is Richard Tariff and I am the Director of EASTCONN Adult Services that serves 21 towns in Eastern CT. for a regional adult education program. Previously, I was the Director of the Vernon Regional Adult Education Program.

As a Director of Adult Education in CT that has been involved in the Adult Credit Diploma Program (Adult High School) for over twenty-five years, I applaud the Education Committee in creating Bill NO 5316.

In an ideal world, we would love to see all students remain in High School and graduate and then proceed to future training, college, career development and/or the arm forces. From my 25+ years in Adult Education, I can share countless stories why students needed to leave their high schools. Anything from incarceration, substance abuse, family crisis, economics, pregnancy, bullying, harassment and need for employment are some of the common reasons why students leave high school.

Having the Superintendent of Schools or their designee, be involved with the transition of the student withdrawing from high school will be one more avenue to retain the students within their high school. With that said, this meeting will also provide one more vehicle to orient and transition the student contemplating withdrawal, to transfer to adult education. In my professional career as an adult educator, we have provided thousands of students the opportunity of obtaining an adult high school diploma which allowed them to be positive role models for their children. Data tells us that a child's odds to graduate from high school are much better if their custodial parent has a high school diploma.

On July 1, 2011, the law will change for students to withdraw from high school to age 17. It is my hope and expectation that Bill 5316 will be clarified and provide provisions for the Superintendent or their designee to continue having the resource of transferring a student to the Adult High School at age 16. As explained in an earlier paragraph, there are many legitimate reasons why a student may need to leave the traditional high school. There may be a situation where a parent needs a child to care for an ill grand parent during the day while the parent works. By allowing a student an alternate way to obtain a high school diploma at age 16 is a critical resource that needs to continue for our children, our economy and our State.

There are many needs within our State for retaining students in High School. I hope that new Regional initiatives develop for students that need alternate settings within the conventional high schools. As people that care about our students and our future work force, we must not reduce the resource for students at age 16 in need of transferring to an adult high school program. Please clarify the language in Bill 5316 so that a Superintendent of schools can transfer a student to Adult Education if they are age 16 after July 1, 2011 and please put specific language that during this exit meeting, opportunities for transferring to the Adult High School will be provided to the student by the Superintendent or their designee.

On behalf of the thousands of students that have benefited from Adult Education in CT, I thank you for your time.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

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